

# 2050 SURE

Visie op vastgoed



Final Report SURE2050



## Executive summary

While Sustainable Public Real Estate Management (SPREM) was introduced some years ago by a number of larger municipalities and at a national level in countries such as the Netherlands, France and Germany, it is largely non-existent in most municipalities in Flanders (BE).

SPREM can be defined as the management – i.e., acquisition, holding, use and disposal – of real estate assets so as to achieve ambitious sustainability goals, minimise the total costs of ownership and life cycle costs, and maximise the benefits of real estate for the community.

The absence of SPREM is a major barrier to large-scale sustainable energy investments in public buildings in the short, medium and long term.

SURE2050 (Sustainable Public Real Estate by 2050) has been a programme to remove this barrier by providing training, tools and coaching to municipalities in Flanders and to public organisations at the Flemish regional level to develop a strategic real estate plan.

SURE2050 was initiated and managed by a broad consortium of public organisations and one private consultancy in Flanders. The programme has received a subsidy of 41.2 million under the European innovation and research programme Horizon 2020.

91 municipalities and 17 public organisations at the regional level joined the SURE2050 programme. They committed to developing a strategic real estate plan. The development of a strategic real estate plan requires an integrated process involving all management levels and stakeholders in an organisation. It results in a clear strategic vision about what kind of real estate portfolio is needed in the near- and longer-term future and how the existing portfolio will be adapted over time. It includes a plan to make buildings carbon-free by 2050 and how the organisation will manage and secure the objectives that have been defined and agreed upon.

These strategic real estate plans have involved investing more than €26 million in measures to make existing buildings more energy efficient and more than €2 million in renewable energy production installations during the programme timeframe. The effects of the strategic real estate plans will also continue in the long term, which is why we expect an increase in investment projects.

The added value of SPREM and having a strategic real estate plan has been recognised by just about all participants. The successful approach has prompted the Flemish government to make the strategic real estate plan mandatory for public organisations at the regional level and to promote it to municipalities.

It is an approach that can be easily implemented in other EU member states and one that supports the transition to reach the ambitious European goals. When we started the programme, we, as a consortium, were convinced of the added value it would deliver, but it was still a surprise to see the impact the programme has had beyond the creation of a strategic real estate plan. It triggered discussions on what the core functions of a public entity should be and how both the people in the organisation and the building stock play a key role in the ability to deliver these core functions. The building portfolio of public organisations moved from a (financial) burden into an added value and expression of their identity. SURE2050 is seen as a brand in Flanders, and we will continue to support this brand and to highlight the importance of sustainable real estate management. A strategic real estate plan is only the beginning of a successful journey towards 2050.

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## Content

1	<b>SURE2050 – Sustainable Real Estate 2050</b>	5
2	<b>Project Consortium</b>	6
3	<b>Participants</b>	7
4	<b>Project results</b>	10
5	<b>From vision to reality, the journey of SURE2050</b>	12
6	<b>Project approach</b>	16
	6.1 Relationship management	16
	6.2 SPREM methodology and coaching	17
	6.3 Investment projects	22
	6.4 Public Policy	23
7	<b>The process for developing a strategic real estate plan</b>	26
	7.1 Step 1 – Introduction and first steps	30
	7.2 Building block 2 – What do we want?	30
	7.3 Building block 3 – What do we have?	32
	7.4 Building block 4 – (external) framework conditions	32
	7.5 Building block 5 – Objectives	32
	7.6 Building block 6 – From vision to strategy	33
	7.7 Building block 7 – Integral real estate policy and management	34
	7.8 Building block 8 – Evaluation and adjustment of the real estate strategy	35
8	<b>Recommendations</b>	37

## 1.SURE2050 – Sustainable Real Estate 2050

Energy efficiency is more than a buzzword, it is a necessity. Within Flanders and its large portfolio of publicly owned buildings, with a lot older as well as heritage buildings, there is still great potential for savings. Does that mean that every public organisation needs to become an energy expert? We don't think so.

The Flemish Energy Company (Vlaams Energiebedrijf) is an external independent agency of the Flemish Government whose mission is to unburden the public sector in its pursuit of more sustainable and efficient energy management. The Flemish Energy Company was founded in 2012 with the main purpose of thoroughly reducing the energy demand of the Flemish government.

From its inception, the Flemish Energy Company has focused on increasing energy efficiency via goal-oriented framework agreements and energy performance contracts. It acts as a market facilitator, by focusing on removing market barriers for energy efficiency investments and investigating technical, financial and legal solutions to build an ambitious and sustainable pipeline of energy efficiency investments.

Buildings owned by public organisations account for a considerable share of the building stock and have high visibility in the public sphere. The public sector at national, regional and local levels should therefore serve as a role model (this is also a key element in the new Energy Efficiency Directive<sup>1</sup>). A much faster and deeper renovation of existing public building stock is needed to live up to this role model function.

The cheapest and greenest energy is the energy we don't use. The Energy Efficiency First Principle is one of the key principles in European energy and climate policy and of the Renovation Wave strategy in particular. It implies adopting a more holistic approach, which takes into account the overall effectiveness and efficiency of a fully publicly owned real estate portfolio. A more efficient publicly owned real estate portfolio means that more social value is created by fewer buildings.

We have noticed that the absence of integrated and professional real estate management is a major barrier to a more efficient real estate portfolio and to making this portfolio future-proof, energy-efficient and carbon-free by 2050. Real estate management is often only organised at an operational level, limited to reactive decisions on building maintenance. Long-term political goals for public real estate are not defined and the added value of a sustainable and socially responsible publicly owned real estate portfolio is not fully recognized.

To tackle these shortcomings, we started SURE2050, with the support of a broad consortium of public and private partners in Flanders, to maximise the involvement of public organisations in the programme.

The main objective of SURE2050 is the development and implementation of Sustainable Public Real Estate Management (SPREM) in Flemish municipalities and public organisations that own buildings at the Flemish Regional Level.

Strategic real estate plans will facilitate and mobilize large-scale sustainable investments in public real estate.

SURE2050 has planted an important seed for further deploying SPREM within the public sector in Flanders. SURE2050 participants play a key role as ambassadors and lead by example. And we are further accelerating the dissemination of SURE2050 with a framework agreement on SPREM to support public organisations with knowledge and resources.

A strategic real estate plan ensures informed investment decisions and the optimal use of every square metre.

Making SPREM a reality does not stop with a real estate strategy document. To reduce energy consumption and improve the quality, comfort and sustainability of public buildings, investment projects must also be implemented. Our framework agreements for energy efficiency services support a cost-efficient and qualitative implementation of those investment projects. Together with the public organisations, we will achieve a carbon-free building portfolio by 2050 at the latest.



Frederik Hindryckx  
CEO of Vlaams Energiebedrijf, the Flemish Energy Company

<sup>1</sup> Energy efficiency directive (europa.eu)





## 2. Project Consortium

The consortium is made up of **the Flemish provinces and their expertise centres for sustainable living and buildings** (the province of Limburg and Dubolimborg, provincial consultancy for sustainable construction and housing; the province of East Flanders; the province of Flemish-Brabant; the province of West Flanders) and Kamp C, a knowledge centre for innovation and sustainable building for the province of Antwerp.

**Fluvius**, is a distribution grid operator in 308 Flemish cities & municipalities. Fluvius offers a wide range of activities in energy, energy efficiency and infrastructure management.

**Factor4** is an engineering company specialising in building performance. It also operates as an EScO (energy service company) and EPC (energy performance contracting) facilitator specialising in upgrading indoor comfort and energy efficiency in existing non-residential buildings, industrial plants and apartment buildings.

A broad consortium of public and private partners was created to maximise the involvement of the public organisations (municipalities and regional Flemish public organisations) in the programme and to support them with the implementation of SPREM in their organisation.

At a regional Flemish level, **the Facility Company** (Het Facilitair Bedrijf) is an organisation within the Flemish Government with a broad range of responsibilities for both soft and hard facilities. The Facility Company is responsible for the management of the main administrative buildings of the Flemish government, in Brussels and in the five provincial capital cities.

The **Flemish Energy Company** (Vlaams Energiebedrijf) is an external independent agency of the Flemish Government, founded with the main purpose of thoroughly reducing the energy demand of the Flemish government. The Flemish Energy Company was the project lead for the programme.

## 3. Participants

Flemish municipalities and regional organisations are increasingly conscious of the disadvantages of their current real estate management practices but, before the start of the SURE2050 programme, were not yet aware of the existence of SPREM. SURE2050 was an answer to the current frustration about the lack of progress and ad hoc real estate decision-making. SURE2050 promoted the needs and benefits of SPREM to Public Clients.

Even before the start of the project, more than 95 municipalities (out of 300) signed a letter of support to indicate their interest.

Before the official start of the programme, SURE2050 had already been announced through several events and communications. Indeed, all the consortium partners provided use of their communication channels (newsletters) to present SURE2050, as well as organising events and activities.

Next to the training sessions, free coaching was used as an incentive to convince public organisations to participate in SURE2050. The threshold to join was kept very low, which made this especially interesting for small and medium municipalities, often underrepresented in European programmes, to join.

***“We are very pleased with the added value provided by SURE2050:***

***as a small municipality, we do not have the know-how and up-to-date information needed for such projects. A very big advantage is that real estate assets are examined critically and potential gains are clearly highlighted. And finally, because of the ‘helicopter view’ approach, we saved money. We might otherwise have spent 130,000 euros on a building that was no longer renovation-worthy or that would even have to be relocated in the short term within the new vision we developed.”***

Aldermen Theo Martens from municipality Hechtel-Eksel  
(province of Limburg, 12,000 inhabitants)



AGENTSCHAP  
FACILITAIR BEDRIJF







From right to left: Heleentje De Brauer, province of Limburg; Gert Broekx, Dubolimborg; Bert Lambrechts, Deputy, province of Limburg; Theo Martens, Alderman, Hechtel-Eksel

*“The registration of 74 participants, of which 65 municipalities and nine Flemish government organisations, at the start of the SURE2050 training programme, exceeded our expectations.*

*For municipalities to officially decide to take part in the SURE2050 programme, a partnership agreement was created. This agreement, together with a template for officially stating that the organisation was taking part and a supporting communication package, was used to inform organisation staff and local citizens of the commitment to SURE2050.”*

Heleentje De Brauer, province of Limburg, partner responsible for managing customer relations within the programme.



Figure 1 - Examples of official communications or press articles on the commitment to take part in the SURE2050 programme.

SURE2050 became the benchmark for Real Estate Strategy and sustainable real estate management in Flanders during the programme’s timeframe. This was achieved through a combination of events that attracted a lot of interest and through sharing best practices, as well as through support on a political level.

As new participants could still join during the programme, SURE2050 reached 108 participants by the end of the programme: 91 municipalities and 17 regional Flemish organisations.

*“There was a clear need for a guide or manual to work towards a sustainable real estate policy.*

*Beerse was confronted with a diverse portfolio, low building occupancy and poor conditions in combination with increasing maintenance costs. Decisions were being made, which is positive in itself, but often without long-term thinking and without considering all aspects of sustainability. I hoped that SURE2050 would help us ask the right questions, so that we make the right decisions for the future, both ecologically and economically, and that’s exactly what’s been happening during the process. We are still facing barriers, but thanks to SURE2050 we have good starting points to continue along this path both in policy and in practice.”*

Dries Huygelen from the municipality of Beerse (province of Antwerp, 18,000 inhabitants, 54 buildings)



## 4. Project Results

*"A major barrier to facilitating and mobilising large-scale sustainable investments in public real estate was the lack of long-term real estate strategies and sustainable real estate management in public entities. Instead, ad hoc decisions and mainly operational real estate management were common practice, with a lot of potential for energy efficiency left unused.*

*Within a real estate strategy, these 'right buildings' and 'right time' are defined. This is outlined visually in the picture below.*

*SURE2050 was started as an initiative to activate this potential, but more importantly to ensure that scarce financial resources were invested in the 'right buildings' and at the 'right time' in their lifecycle."*



Erik Van Agtmaal  
The Facility Company

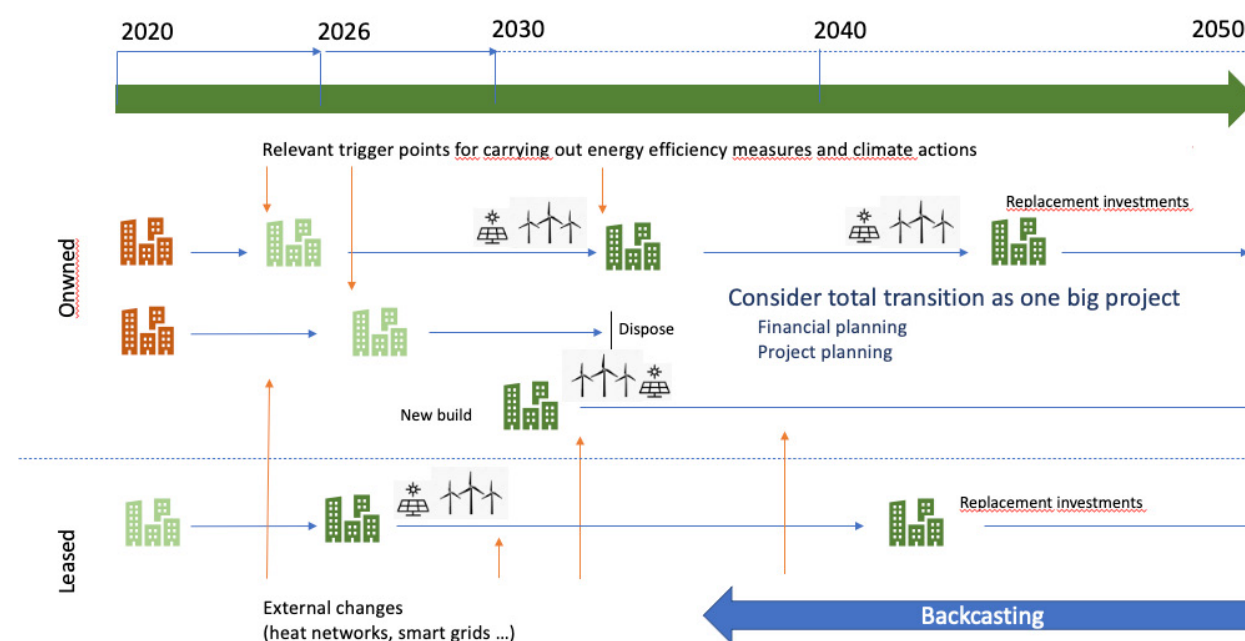


Figure 2 - Visual - transition towards a decarbonized public building stock

Number of participants:  
**108**

Total investment:  
**28,156,439 EUR**

91 municipalities  
or provinces  
taking part =  
30 % of all  
Flemish  
municipalities



investment  
projects:  
**105**



energy  
savings:  
**19,606 MWh/  
year**



CO<sub>2</sub> savings  
**4,034 tonnes  
CO<sub>2</sub>/year**



Renewable Energy  
production:  
**1,994 MWh/  
year**

17 entities at the  
Flemish regional level,  
covering more than  
90% of all Flemish  
regional government  
buildings.

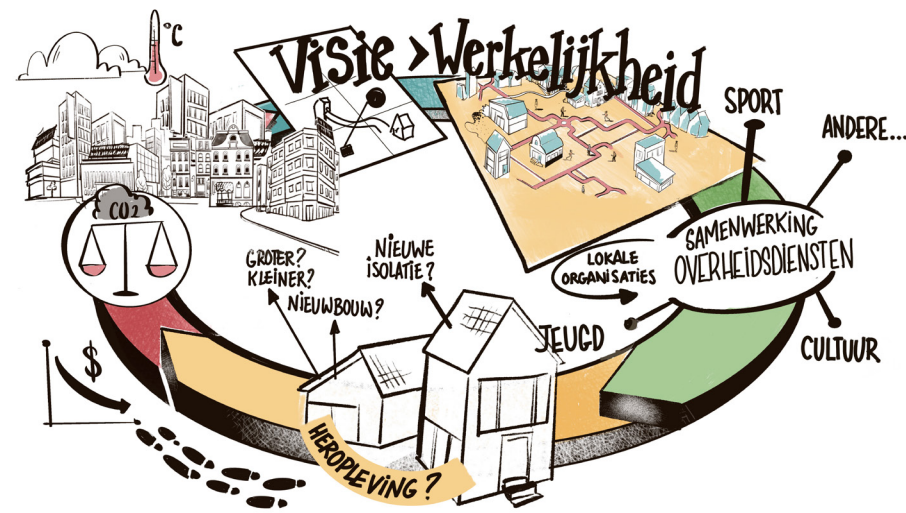
### Public policy impact

SURE2050 changed how real estate is valued within public organisations: from an operating cost to a valuable asset, supporting the core tasks of the public organisation.





## 5. From vision to reality, the journey of SURE2050



The project convinced multiple stakeholders of the added value of a strategic real estate plan. This resulted in a high number of participants in the programme and impact at a public policy level.

The scope of a real estate strategy and SURE2050 is presented in this short film<sup>2</sup>.



The main advantages of a strategic real estate plan are:

- The organisation develops a **vision** of their real estate,
- Understanding the importance and **social value** of real estate to support the core functions of the organisation and a better understanding of the **financial impact** of real estate and real estate decisions,
- Increasing the focus on the integral **real estate policy (strategic)**, supporting the **core tasks of the organisation** instead of simply focusing on building management,
- **Real estate organisation**: a strategic real estate plan ensures clear responsibilities within real estate management and the role of the real estate department within the organisation (sound decision-making on internal vs. external real estate management),
- **Clear framework** within the organisation for all decisions regarding real estate policy and management. This includes ambitions for investment projects or new-build projects on energy efficiency, as well as other aspects such as circularity

(efficiency of materials), clear agreements and insights into real estate budgets (including maintenance). This framework offers a long-term policy management tool that transcends party-political changes in government,

- **Prioritizing investment projects** for the portfolio: a pipeline of investment projects provides insight into the impact on resources and budgets,
- Focus on **monitoring and reporting**, including energy management. Energy management seeks continuous energy savings within building stock.

SURE2050 developed the framework, templates and supporting material. SURE2050 participants - municipalities and regional Flemish entities - received coaching to develop a strategic real estate plan for their building stock.

The advantages of SURE2050 were also convincing at a **policy level**. SURE2050 has been included as the preferred management approach for public buildings in the Flemish Energy and Climate plan (part of the National Energy and Climate Plan) and **public entities at a Flemish government level are required to have a strategic real estate plan in 2023**.

One of the initiatives of Minister Somers, Vice-Minister- President of the Government of Flanders, Flemish Minister for Home Affairs, Public Governance, Civic Integration and Equal Opportunities, was a **Climate Action Pact** for Flemish municipalities. The added value of a strategic real estate plan for municipalities is part of this Climate Action

Pact, with **SURE2050 as best practice**.

*“From the experience of SURE2050, it became clear that the proven benefits of a strategic real estate plan reinforce policies and help to further streamline and adjust them. It is one of the leverage factors of the transition that we need by 2050. Even after the end of the programme,*

*SURE2050 is still seen as a ‘quality label’, a guide in the journey of public entities towards Sustainable Public Real Estate Management.”*



Tina Van Lierde  
Flemish Energy Company  
Project Manager

By the end of the programme, 20 public entities, almost 20% of all participants, either had a final strategic real estate plan or had the principles of sustainable real estate management (framework) approved at political and management levels. These principles (framework) allow entities to continue finalising their real estate strategy over the coming months.

Not all participants finalised their strategy during the programme, mainly due to a lack of resources. Notwithstanding, SURE2050 had an impact even there - the commitment and understanding of the need for a real estate strategy was not in question.

*“The journey of working on a strategic real estate plan and questioning the current way of working is an added value in itself.*

*The province of West Flanders was both a consortium partner and a participant in SURE2050. The province also took part in the FALCO project<sup>3</sup> (Financing Ambitious Local Climate Objectives), from which the need for a strategic real estate plan became very visible. The strategic real estate plan we created as part of SURE2050 is now the basis to achieve a zero-carbon portfolio and ensure optimal use of our financial resources.”*



Wannes Meersmans  
Province of West-Flanders

<sup>2</sup> [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pohZPUrk6VU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pohZPUrk6VU)

<sup>3</sup> [www.financinglocalclimateplans.eu/home.htm](https://www.financinglocalclimateplans.eu/home.htm)





With the support of these participant-ambassadors and a framework agreement available to all public entities, to support with resources and knowledge, more strategic real estate plans will be completed in the near future.

SURE2050 participants reported that the programme had a positive impact in the following areas, among others:

- Improved cooperation between different services and understanding of the importance of real estate in supporting policies (services to residents, own staff),
- Integration of spatial policies, energy strategies and property management,
- Insights into opportunities for downsizing the building stock through more multifunctional use of current buildings,
- Better choices regarding buildings that should be prioritised for renovation and what measures are best suited for such renovations,

- Better follow-up of and insights into rental contracts and building user agreements,
- Better preparation for crisis situations. The energy crisis was cited as an example where municipalities that had developed a strategic real estate plan took these plans as a basis to see what measures could be implemented more quickly to meet increased energy costs,
- Importance of energy management – more insights also lead to better follow-up and proactive rather than reactive policies,
- Consideration of property status (stay, stretch, leave) as a parameter in operational and strategic decisions,
- Preparation of real estate in the event municipalities are required to merge.

## Participant SURE2050: City of Hasselt

As a participant of the SURE2050 programme, the city of Hasselt (with circa 300 buildings) developed a sustainable strategic real estate plan with the ambition of achieving an energy-neutral building portfolio by 2050. A diversified approach will support achieving this goal, including investing in energy-efficient renovations, divestment, and demolition to create more open space and encouraging multifunctional use of buildings.

The SURE2050 coordinator, architect Steven Van Esser, acknowledged the importance of cooperation between all policymakers, facility management and users of the buildings (both internal and external) as a critical success factor.

*“Only by involving all the relevant city municipal services was it possible to create a widely supported strategy. Further key elements of sustainable real estate management are urban planning and energy strategies. Looking for opportunities to recover heat, energy and*

*heat sharing, energetic coupling of public and private infrastructure, mobility, accessibility, providing open spaces within the city, etc. The SURE2050 programme provided the necessary push and support to achieve this result. A strategic real estate plan that offers insights into the path ahead and visibility on the investments required to reach set goals.”*

**Aldermen Laurence Libert**, who is responsible for the City of Hasselt’s building portfolio:

*“At the city of Hasselt, we want to lead by example in Flanders. We are ambitious in realising the Flemish and European climate objectives. The SURE2050 programme was a perfect fit for our ambitions. Our real estate strategy will lead us towards an energy-neutral building portfolio. The city of Hasselt does not see 2050 as an insurmountable challenge but as an objective we truly believe in and want to achieve.”*

*“The city of Hasselt does not see 2050 as an insurmountable challenge but as an objective we truly believe in and want to achieve.”*







## 6. Project approach

SURE2050 had multiple objectives to fulfil. The main objective was the development and implementation of Sustainable Public Real Estate Management (SPREM) in Flemish municipalities and among public building owners at the Flemish Regional Level with the objective of facilitating and mobilising large-scale sustainable investments in public real estate. To achieve this, SPREM had to be developed further and adapted to the situation of public organisations in Flanders. These public organisations then had to be convinced of the added value of SPREM and guided in the process of drafting a strategic real estate plan.

In addition, generating longer-term impact and the alignment of SURE2050 with other initiatives and (future) public policy was of equal importance.

**This approach – consisting of close contact with participants and combining methodology with practical training, sharing best practices (learning networks) and hands-on coaching – was successful.**

**Key areas of focus:**

1. **Relationship management:** close contact with participants to stay relevant throughout the programme’s timeframe
2. **SPREM methodology and coaching:** pragmatic step-by-step approach, without simplifying the broad scope of a strategic real estate plan
3. **Investment projects:** advice and support with preparation and execution, sound investment decisions as part of a strategic real estate plan
4. **Impact on public policy:** ensuring long-term impact and alignment of SURE2050 with other initiatives and (future) public policy.

The responsibilities of provinces are supra-local – matters that transcend local, municipal interests and that municipal authorities have difficulty carrying out themselves. They also perform supporting tasks for other authorities at the request of the federal or Flemish government or the municipalities. Provinces are also responsible for territory-based cooperation between administrations such as cooperation between various partners (local authorities, private organisations, Flemish government, etc.).

Each province has a centre of expertise specialising in sustainable living and buildings. These centres of expertise support relevant stakeholders including private building owners, SMEs and municipalities with concrete advice about how to improve the sustainability and energy efficiency of buildings.

All the provinces, along with their centres of expertise, are participating in SURE2050. The province of Antwerp was represented in the consortium by its centre of sustainability and innovation, Kamp C.

Through their existing relationships with municipalities, the provinces were a key success factor in convincing municipalities to join the programme and keeping them engaged during the programme.

**The Facility Company – the first point of contact for the Flemish Regional organisations**

The Facility Company was the first participant in the SURE2050 project to deliver its strategic real estate plan, following the methodology of SURE2050. As a consortium partner, the Facility Company played a key role both in relationship management with the Flemish Regional organisations as well in the SPREM training and coaching sessions for those organisations.

The Facility Company is also responsible for the V13. These are strategic meetings at a regional Flemish level with the 13 biggest public building owners. The V13 topics on sustainable real estate were used in SURE2050 webinars and workshops.

### 6.1 Relationship management

Relationship management was an important part of the SURE2050 approach. Within the programme, the consortium partners used a customer relationship management system to easily exchange information about contact persons and the progress of the participants. Each participant was required to define a SURE2050 coordinator (first point of contact) and a SURE2050 sponsor (political or management lead).

Because of the short communication channels between the consortium partners and the participants of SURE2050, the approach could be adapted during the project timeframe to achieve the best results. Some examples: shift from classroom

training sessions to more one-to-one coaching sessions and learning network sessions with a small number of participants; larger online events (because of COVID-19, but also to ensure greater participation and more opportunities to record the events for dissemination).

Managing expectations was crucial at the start of the programme. Expectations from participants were that they would develop their strategic real estate plans in six months, by following the SURE2050 sessions. Even though a shared approach was used, the journey each public organisation had to go through was not the same and took more time than initially expected.

**The Flemish provinces – the first point of contact for the municipalities**

Belgium is divided into three regions. The Flemish Region, or Flanders, is subdivided into five provinces with a total of 308 municipalities. The provinces are (1) Antwerp, (2) Limburg, (3) East-Flanders, (4) Flemish-Brabant and (5) West-Flanders.



Province	Capital	N° of municipalities	Population
Antwerp	Antwerp	69	1,907,727
Limburg	Hasselt	42	894,465
East-Flanders	Ghent	60	1,560,205
Flemish-Brabant	Leuven	65	1,186,596
West-Flanders	Bruges	64	1,219,142

### 6.2 SPREM methodology and coaching Municipalities

The SPREM methodology was shared with the participants through:

- Training sessions organised by province – basics of SPREM and related topics, e.g., spatial planning
- Learning networks – small groups of participants, focusing on sharing experience
- Ad Hoc workshops – central workshops on a specific topics, mostly suggested by participants, e.g., circularity, heritage buildings, etc.
- Central online events – focus on sharing best practices from participants (Flanders) or abroad
- One-on-one coaching sessions
- Online courses on a learning platform

Factor4 defined the methodology for SPREM within the SURE2050 project. A pragmatic step-by-step approach to guide the municipalities towards a strategic real estate plan. Through coaching sessions, one-on-one or in small groups, Factor4 helped translate theory into practice.

To support the participants during their journey to creating a strategic real estate plan, a learning platform was set up. Through cooperation with the BE-REEL project<sup>4</sup>, we were able to make use of their learning platform. That’s how SURE2050 came to be one of the courses on this central learning platform. The platform will continue to exist and be maintained by the Flemish Agency on Energy even after the project ends. During the project timeframe, 717 users logged on to the platform for the SURE2050 course.

<sup>4</sup> be-reel.be, a life integrated project



Initially, decentralised training sessions by province were planned. The first training sessions were also organised in this way. For reasons of process efficiency and due to COVID-19, this was gradually adjusted to larger, central events, which were also recorded and made available on the web-based learning platform BE-REEL. As such, the training methodology was transformed into a step-by-step 'learning by doing' approach, with the SPREM coach as a guide. The SPREM coach could thus provide more tailor-made solutions for the wide range of specific situations involved. The municipalities were also more in favour of these recommendations compared with the decentralised training courses. The result was a system that can be integrated step by step via the SPREM coaching sessions, including specific instruments (tools, manuals, etc. to be used by a person) and/or activities (multiple active stakeholders: e.g., a workshop, presentation or meeting).

In addition to the one-to-one coaching sessions, **learning network sessions** were organized for small groups of (similar) participants. This gave them the opportunity to share experiences and learn from each other.

As a way of overcoming time and resource constraints, as well as to provide practical examples for all the participants, the decision was taken to start an intensive coaching programme for one municipality in each province (five in total). A mix of small-to medium-sized municipalities was chosen, as a representative sample.

The results of this **intensive coaching programme** were shared mid December 2021 in a webinar and through communications<sup>5</sup>. As part of this intensive coaching, an update of the template with real life examples from the coached municipalities was created and made available on the learning platform.

*"For us, it became really interesting when it came to planning and strategy and decision-making in the long term. In the beginning the training was a bit too general. When the one-to-one coaching started, the added value of this project became very clear to us."*

*We now make choices about future projects based on careful planning, meaning they are built on stronger foundations and are future-oriented."*



Tijs Naert  
Aldermen from Harelbeke  
responsible for building stock

Given the broad concept of a real estate strategy, ad hoc workshops or related learning paths were offered covering a wide variety of topics including circularity, heat networks, sustainable renovation of heritage buildings, life cycle analysis, spatial planning, FMIS systems, real estate organisation, revolving funds and intracting, and more.

<sup>5</sup> [sure2050.be/vijf-voorbeeldgemeenten-over-hun-extra-begeleiding](https://sure2050.be/vijf-voorbeeldgemeenten-over-hun-extra-begeleiding)



*"The guidance was excellent. The route to a real estate strategy also exposes a lot of underlying issues, which otherwise would not (yet) have surfaced."*

Pieter Degreef  
Sustainability Officer of Landen

*"The goal of the ad hoc workshops was to introduce topics related to sustainable real estate management in a concise and accessible way,*

*so the participants could use the content for their strategic real estate plan without having to survey all the information themselves. The topics were often based on feedback received from the participants and were either covered by parties with relevant experience within the consortium or external experts. For example, we did a series of three workshops on heritage buildings as these are often 'difficult' buildings within the portfolio. All ad hoc workshops were online webinars and recorded."*



Luna Lannoo  
province of East-Flanders

**Larger online events** were organised at regular intervals. These events were a combination of sharing of best practices between participants (inspiration and engagement), and presentations on specific topics related to SPREM (content). Most events were organised for all municipalities in Flanders, to encourage those not taking part to join or start with SPREM.

At the end of the programme, two final full-day events were organised in October 2022. The focus of these events was to emphasise that SURE2050 as a concept and brand will continue to exist. The end of the programme is only the start of a broad implementation of SPREM in Flanders and a means to achieve a carbon-free public building stock and be a public sector role model.

During these events, participants were able to highlight the work they had done while encouraging other municipalities that were not taking part in the programme to start with SPREM.





## Participant SURE2050: City of Bruges

Bruges, also known as the Venice of the North, is a UNESCO World Heritage City in the province of West Flanders. Bruges has a portfolio of around 700 buildings in management, of which it owns around 400. The city of Bruges, in addition to being internationally renowned for its historic architectural heritage, also has the ambition to be recognised as setting best practice for developing and managing a sustainable and socially responsible real estate portfolio.

With the launch of the SURE2050 programme, Bruges committed to drawing up and implementing a real estate strategy. The SURE2050 programme was a turning point for Bruges in terms of their real estate management and organisation. The SURE2050 coordinator, Thierry Toussaint, took on the responsibility of developing real estate management to a more professional standard within the city administration. Bruges has always actively used its own real estate to support policy. However, the organisation of real estate, which was mainly at the operational and tactical level, and in which the responsibilities for real estate and property management were split, was no longer adequate to take the next step towards sustainable real

estate management. With the new real estate organisation, which focuses on building a real estate value chain and brings about close cooperation between the different departments, Bruges is ready to achieve its vision.

Mr. Colin Beheydt, general manager of the City of Bruges, puts it as follows:

***“Major changes are possible only if all of the following exist at the same time:***

- ***vision, commitment and perseverance on the part of managers/directors (policy);***
- ***knowledge, know-how and capacity to turn this vision into reality (organisation);***
- ***resources to finance its implementation (budget).***

***The City of Bruges has vision, strategy and ambitious goals. The real estate organisation has been optimised and numerous projects were started. Financing remains a huge problem, but implementation is non-negotiable if we want to reach the climate goals.”***

Colin Beheydt - general manager of the City of Bruges

***“The City of Bruges has vision, strategy and ambitious goals.”***



## Flemish regional level

Real estate policy and management differ in several areas between municipalities on one hand and public organisations at the Flemish level on the other. For example, municipalities have a wider range of buildings to respond to different social needs and have more tasks to perform locally, including spatial planning.

The Flemish regional level organisations often have a more specific building portfolio, supporting their core responsibilities. The Flemish government decided to centralise the management of all their public office buildings at the regional level with the aim of improving the efficiency of their portfolio and delivering a carbon-neutral public building stock by 2045.

Other specific buildings remain within the portfolio, hence the need for real estate management on the part of respective Flemish regional organisations.

There is a large variation in building portfolios, ranging from laboratories to castles, depots, training centres, theatres, and concert halls.

For this reason, it was decided to split the training sessions between cities and municipalities on the one hand and training sessions for public organisations at the Flemish level on the other.

At a regional Flemish level, the methodology was refined to better support the needs of the regional organisations. Specific learning and coaching sessions were prepared and organised by the Facility Company and the Flemish Energy Company.

Of course, efforts were made to avoid these parallel tracks becoming separate tracks by organising regular discussion sessions to enhance cross-fertilization. Best practices from both municipalities and the Flemish regional-level organisations were thus shared, leading to greater impact for SURE2050 because of this exchange of knowledge.

Two series of online training sessions were organised. The first series was a combination of sessions on the methodology and templates to create a real estate strategy and sessions on specific topics, like circularity, multifunctional use of buildings and cooperation with other public organisations, financing, and budgeting, etc. These sessions were more focused on the strategic part of sustainable real estate management.

The second series focused on operational real estate management, provided by Buildwise<sup>6</sup>. Topics included, maintenance contracts, risk analyses, fire prevention and safety, energy management, and more.

<sup>6</sup> [www.buildwise.be/nl/](http://www.buildwise.be/nl/)

After these initial training sessions, the focus shifted to individual coaching sessions in combination with sharing best practices between the different participants.

In May 2022, an in-person seminar was organised. The objective was to share best practices, solutions, expertise etc. between Flemish public organisations about sustainable public real estate management and about the process to develop a strategic real estate plan.

Each organisation presented one aspect of their approach and results concerning their real estate strategy.

The participants strongly agreed on the value, for their organisation, of the process to develop a strategic real estate plan and the importance of that plan to delivering a future-proof and carbon-free building portfolio. A large majority was in favour of continuing the information exchange on real estate and real estate management including energy and climate objectives, difficulties, and solutions.

In October 2022, a second and final event was organised for all entities at the Flemish regional level. The focus of this event was financing and real estate management organisation, two topics identified as bottlenecks during the SURE2050 project. These topics were discussed with input from the consortium partners, from the participants and external speakers (offering market knowledge). Participants' presentations of their real estate strategies was another opportunity to share knowledge.







### Continuation of the SPREM methodology

The SPREM methodology was also used as a basis for a framework agreement on Real Estate Strategy, procured by both the Facility Company and the Flemish Energy Company. This framework agreement can be used by public organisations which do not have sufficient internal capacity or knowledge to secure the services of an external consultancy that will support them in creating a strategic real estate plan and implementing SPREM. This framework agreement, currently active, is an important part of the continuation of SURE2050.

Dilbeek, one of the participants of SURE2050, will make use of this option to finalise their strategic real estate plan.

*“We started as a participant in the SURE2050 programme. Although the added value of a strategic real estate plan became very clear at a management and policy level in Dilbeek, we had a lack of internal resources to take on this extra work. We will now use the framework agreement to support us with the finalisation of our strategic real estate plan.”*

Diethard Vanderheyden  
real estate expert at Dilbeek  
A municipality in Flemish Brabant

### 6.3 SPREM methodology and coaching

Coaching on investment projects was provided by multiple project partners from the consortium. All project partners, who provide advice on energy efficiency investment projects, now refer to a strategic real estate plan as a first step to making informed choices regarding investment projects and procurement strategy. Especially for long-term contracts, such as Energy performance contracts, a strategic real estate plan offers added value. The framework agreements on energy efficiency and renewable energy provided by the Flemish Energy Company support the execution of investment projects for the entire public sector in Flanders. The Facility Company used their experience in supporting investment projects for organisations at a Flemish regional level as well as investing themselves in their portfolio. For the main administrative buildings of the Flemish government, the Facility Company works with long-term rental agreements. Stringent requirements on energy efficiency are incorporated in these long-term agreements. These investments are co-financed in part by the Facility Company and settled through the rental costs.

*“Fluvius guides the municipalities in scoping investment projects. Our project leads then take on the project management and responsibility for the execution of these projects. As such, we ensure investments in energy efficiency with municipalities are delivered to a high standard and we tackle the lack of resources municipalities often have to execute these renovation projects.”*



Maaike Verhulst  
project manager at Fluvius

### 6.4 Public Policy

At a political level, SURE2050 was able to convince that SPREM and a strategic real estate plan is a prerequisite to reaching the sustainability and energy targets for the public building portfolios. The SURE2050 approach became formal public policy: all Flemish organisations at the central level with a building portfolio are required to have a strategic real estate plan by the end of 2023.

Almost all public organisations at the Flemish level, covering more than 90% of all buildings used by the regional government joined the SURE2050 programme. The responsibility of public entities to lead by example is recognised in policy. Public entities are obliged to comply with energy performance requirements for their building portfolio<sup>7</sup>.

*“As the Facility Company, we have the responsibility to set an example on sustainable real estate management.*



Frank Geets  
Director-General for the Facility Company

*If we want to reach a carbon-free public building stock by 2050, we need to start now. SURE2050 was for us an extra push to create a strategic real estate plan for the more than 150 bigger buildings under our responsibility. Through energy management, which is one of our focus areas, we already achieved a 40% decrease in carbon emissions and in our renovation projects, we strive towards energy-neutral and even energy-positive buildings. With our strategic real estate plan and a real estate label (stay, stretch, leave) for each building, we are now all aligned within the organisation on the roadmap to 2050. Our strategic real estate plan also provides crucial information for our external stakeholders: the users of our buildings, but also our Minister, responsible for the budget. With a clear vision and plan, we can show that we are investing in the right buildings at the optimal time.”*

The municipalities are under the responsibility of Mr. Bart Somers, Deputy Minister-President of the Government of Flanders, Flemish Minister for Home Affairs, Public Governance, Civic Integration and Equal Opportunities. One of the initiatives of Minister Somers, was a Local Energy and Climate Pact for Flemish municipalities. The first version was signed by 294 of the 300 Flemish municipalities<sup>8</sup>. By now there is already a second version of the Pact, with more stringent objectives. The added value of a strategic real estate plan for municipalities is part of this Local Energy and Climate Pact, with SURE2050 as best practice.

<sup>7</sup> [omgeving.vlaanderen.be/intern-klimaatplan-vlaamse-overheid](https://omgeving.vlaanderen.be/intern-klimaatplan-vlaamse-overheid)

<sup>8</sup> [www.vlaanderen.be/lokaal-bestuur/beleid-in-ontwikkeling-2019-2024/relanceprojecten/lokaal-energie-en-klimaatpact#lekp-eeen-voorbeeld-voor-europa](https://www.vlaanderen.be/lokaal-bestuur/beleid-in-ontwikkeling-2019-2024/relanceprojecten/lokaal-energie-en-klimaatpact#lekp-eeen-voorbeeld-voor-europa)



Bart Somers, Vice-Minister-President of the Government of Flanders, Flemish Minister for Home Affairs, Public Governance, Civic Integration and Equal Opportunities

*“The European ambition to become climate neutral by 2050 requires action at all levels of government.*”

*This transition has an impact on all citizens. Municipalities, the closest level of government to these citizens, are therefore crucial in the road to 2050. With the ability to mobilise local action, a hands-on approach and by acting as highly visible role models, municipalities can take the lead in reaching the climate goals. That is the cornerstone of our Local Energy and Climate Pact, with very clear and concrete objectives in four areas (greening, participatory energy, sustainable mobility and rainwater). Alongside financial support, learning networks are also crucial to accelerating action.*

*SURE2050 provides this learning network for sustainable real estate management and a strategic real estate plan, an important step towards a carbon-free public building portfolio. As mayor of the city of Mechelen, I have made a commitment to the SURE2050 programme. The framework on sustainable real estate management, which was approved by the city council, now provides a clear direction to all our stakeholders, both internal and external. And with the investment projects in our own buildings, we lead by example.”*

Mr. Bart Somers was also one of the keynote speakers at our online event organised as part of SURE2050 to underpin the importance of sustainable real estate for municipalities.

SURE2050 also started a close collaboration with the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (Vlaamse Vereniging voor Steden en Gemeenten, VVSG). The Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities was assigned the responsibility in Flanders of setting up an energy centre of expertise for municipalities (Climate network, Netwerk Klimaat, NEKL). It is also the knowledge partner for the Local Energy and Climate Pact.

*“As the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities, we understand the needs and challenges of the municipalities and see sustainable real estate management as a necessary step towards a carbon-free public building stock. As a partner in SURE2050, we want to support the municipalities in their ambition to deliver a future-proof public building stock through strategic and long-term planning. Knowledge exchange is crucial and we enable this through information sessions and a knowledge base for sharing best practice. But we also focus on hands-on actions and innovative pilot projects. One of the initiatives we took is to support setting up a local ‘revolving capacity fund’ that re-invests small and quick ‘no regret’ energy savings in energy management (resources) for four municipalities as a pilot case in 2022. This was inspired by a webinar SURE2050 organised with Energy Cities<sup>9</sup> on internal contracting and recurring signals from municipalities about structural lack of capacity/time to tackle energy savings, sustainable real estate strategy, etc.*

*Thanks to the success of the pilot, this initiative is being scaled up through inter-municipal actors that will replicate this approach with 12 to 20 municipalities.”*



Kris Moonen  
energy efficiency officer buildings and renovation  
Climate Network

<sup>9</sup> [energy-cities.eu/publication/infinite-solutions-guidebook-2/](https://energy-cities.eu/publication/infinite-solutions-guidebook-2/)







## 7. The process of developing a strategic real estate plan

The strategic real estate plan is an important cornerstone of SPREM. While the goal is to have a strategic real estate plan, the process of developing this plan creates value itself. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for an organisation with regard to its real estate policy development and real estate management become visible.

A strategic real estate plan and the process of developing it are valuable for public organisations regardless of the size of their real estate portfolio or level of real estate management professionalisation.

*“At SURE2050, we have developed a comprehensive set of guidelines to assist municipalities and public organizations in creating a strategic real estate plan.”*

*At the start of the programme, we recognized the importance of a practical, step-by-step approach. This approach was further refined through our coaching sessions, resulting in a finalised scheme and a detailed template for a strategic real estate plan.”*



Sven Wuyts  
Factor4



## Strategic Real Estate Plan Structure

### What do we have?

- Current building portfolio inventory / basic info
- Current real estate organisation

### Goals

- Energy, carbon, mobility, biodiversity, water management, circularity, etc.

### What do we want?

- Define the core services / activities now and in future (strategy of the organisation)
- Define additional conditions (e.g., accessibility)

### Additional conditions

- Changes in society
- Local renewable energy potential
- Financial restrictions

## Strategic Real Estate Plan

Action plan buildings  
short term (5-10y)

Vision  
buildings  
long term  
(20-30y)

Sustainable real  
estate management

Evaluation  
and adjustment



The step-by-step approach was further structured into eight 'steps' or 'building blocks', used as a backbone for the SURE2050 learning module.

*“Within the Rhedcoop project<sup>10</sup> already, we experienced the added value for municipalities of an easily accessible learning module.*

*During the SURE2050 programme, we collected a lot of information through webinars, best practices from participants and coaching sessions. We transformed all this information into building blocks or 'steps', as a guide for the journey to developing a strategic real estate plan. All municipalities can now use these guidelines on the learning platform.”*



Katarine Bouckaert  
province of Flemish Brabant

## 8 steps

### 1. Introduction and first steps

- What is strategic real estate policy
- How to make a strategic real estate plan
- A basic policy paper to start with – define the framework to work in

### 2. What do we want? (demand)

- What are the social needs
- How will these needs evolve in the future (2030 – 2040 – 2050)
- What kind of services should be offered by the organisation (strategy for the organisation's activities)
- What type of buildings and level of comfort are needed for these services and where: in the short and longer-term
- What buildings do we need for our own personnel, now and in the future

### 3. What do we have? (supply)

- How to list the current portfolio and its performance (tools and approach)
- Working with heritage buildings

### 4. (External) conditions

- Financial conditions
- Sustainable energy sources, energy strategies
- A changing society

### 5. Imposed and self-defined objectives and requirements

- Imposed objectives and regulations
- Final objectives for real estate
- Short term and interim objectives

### 6. From vision to strategy

- Defining the change assignment → map demand and supply
- How to define the core real estate portfolio
- How to define the status and future of each building
- Prioritisation and high-level timeline

### 7. Integral sustainable real estate policy and management

- How to make the link between the strategic, tactical and operational levels
- Real estate management organisation and supporting tools (information, e.g., Energy management, Facility management systems)
- Decisions on in-house vs. external real estate management, decisions on procurement strategies (e.g., energy performance contracts), own property versus leasing
- Divestment of land and buildings
- Deep renovation versus new build

### 8. Evaluation of the real estate strategy and adjustments

- The Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle
- Evaluation and update of the strategy

The guidelines in Dutch are publicly available on the SURE2050 learning platform<sup>11</sup>.  
A summary of these steps is provided below.

<sup>10</sup>[www.grensregio.eu/projecten/rhedcoop-renovatie-en-hernieuwbare-energie-diensten-via-co%C3%B6peraties](http://www.grensregio.eu/projecten/rhedcoop-renovatie-en-hernieuwbare-energie-diensten-via-co%C3%B6peraties)

<sup>11</sup>[www.be-reel.be/course/sure2050](http://www.be-reel.be/course/sure2050)





## 7.1 Step 1 – Introduction and first steps

A best practice from the city of Mechelen was their approach to using the Covenant of Mayors to agree on common ground, which served as a foundation for the administration to define a set of principles, which were approved at a political level. This set of principles provides the administration with a framework to further develop a strategic real estate plan and set up sustainable real estate management.

It is important that such a framework is aligned with and officially approved within the organisation.

This approach has multiple benefits:

- Mitigation of the risk of defining a strategic real estate plan, but no political commitment to all investment projects defined over the longer term.
- Providing a framework for decision-making during the time the administration works on a sustainable real estate plan (avoid ad hoc decisions not in line with the defined principles).

- The political approval of the framework implies an official decision ('mandate') for the administration to give priority and time to further develop SPREM.

To this end, SURE2050 created a policy document that can be adapted by each municipality/organisation. This basic policy document on real estate policy outlines the major objectives for real estate, the importance of SPREM and a strategic real estate plan and defines who will be involved in the process of developing a strategic plan and who will be the project owner and project manager. The project owner is, by preference, an alderman or high-level public servant. The project manager is mostly a senior public servant from the real estate management department.

## 7.2 Building block 2 – What do we want?

This building block, demand analysis, defines the current needs and (future) demand for real estate. As an organisation or municipality, this starts with determining the core task(s) the organisation has and which needs these task(s) fulfil. The long-term vision of the organisation is important in this first step rather than the current situation. How will current needs change over time? How do we, as an organisation, adapt how we operate to take into account these (future) changes? Which stakeholders are involved, is there potential for cooperation?

What is the impact of this on the buildings or open space required to be successful in the long term as an organisation?

What are the main conditions that the buildings or open space must meet, such as functions, location and accessibility, identity, energy and climate, capacity, etc.?

The process described above is carried out through workshops, involving all relevant stakeholders. This is important to arrive at a vision with broad support.

Based on the final determination of the demand, strategic choices are made and the (future) supply of buildings can be aligned with the (future) demand for buildings.

**Vincent Van Kerckhove**, project lead buildings, city of Dendermonde: ***"The workshops to identify the needs were an important step for us. The coaching of SURE2050 supported us to define the needs and future trends and to align the visions of the different stakeholders and users of our buildings."***



### Participant SURE2050: ILVO

Air photo of ILVO  
(Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food)

***"Today, research for and about sustainable food and a healthy environment is perhaps more relevant than ever."***

Within its 'living labs' ILVO aims to further build on its role as a future-oriented and demand-driven knowledge centre for sustainable agriculture, fisheries and food production.

The largest site, with offices, laboratories, stables and agricultural research fields is located in Merelbeke, near Ghent. The current buildings at this site are spread across the site and were built from the sixties onwards without taking into account potential synergies. The technical condition and energy performance of a large number of older buildings is poor.

The SURE2050 project initiated a process starting from the development of a new vision on the future role of the institute in sustainable agriculture and food production and how a new configuration of research and other buildings would facilitate and support that role. The involvement of many stakeholder groups and management levels has led to new insights about what kind of buildings are needed and what would be an optimal configuration of buildings at the site. Achieving a future carbon-free building portfolio and multi-functional buildings that can be adapted over time to new needs and functions are part of the objectives in the strategic real estate plan. The plan is also used to inform the Flemish government and to secure political support and financial funding.

**Joris Relaes**, Director-General of ILVO:

***"Today, research for and about sustainable food and a healthy environment is perhaps more relevant than ever. To ensure that ILVO can continue to play its role in the search for solutions in the coming decades, thoughtful and sound investment in a future-oriented, efficient infrastructure is needed. There is a plan. Inspired in part by the United Nations Sustainability Goals (SDGs), the concept of 'the ILVO Research Kouter' saw the light of day in 2020. This includes, among other things, an integrated real estate strategy that prioritises unprecedented synergies in the organisation. By opting for one central campus with shared services and high-performance satellites around it, we limit space occupation, stimulate knowledge sharing and streamline internal operations. Moreover, the visual and architectural style of the campus must reflect the leading research that takes place within it and the rural environment of which ILVO is a part."***







### 7.3 Building block 3 – What do we have?

To define the change assignment, the demand analysis (what do we want) needs to be combined with the supply analysis (what do we have).

Which buildings and land do we currently have in our portfolio? What is their current state and how futureproof are these buildings? What are the optimal renovation moments (natural renovation moments, legal considerations)?

A template for a full portfolio overview and building passport as well as documentation on evaluating buildings, such as a decision tree, quick scans or condition surveys, or energy scans were part of the SURE2050 handbook.

**“Our real estate strategy<sup>12</sup> is now the reference for our investment projects.**

*The real estate status of our buildings, ‘stay, stretch, leave’ defines which energy efficiency measures are still useful to invest in. To assess the current state of our buildings, we used the ELISE<sup>13</sup> methodology (Energy and Life Integrated in a Sustainable Environment). This methodology is developed in Flanders and is an extension of the NEN2767 for condition surveys, but with more attention to Energy management, comfort (Life), sustainability, environment and location and integrating technical and strategic real estate management.”*

Peter Bockstaele  
The Facility Company  
consortium partner and participant

### 7.4 Building block 4 – (external) framework conditions

Often, external conditions have an impact on the decisions within a strategic real estate plan. External conditions can be linked to infrastructure (e.g., heat networks, mobility plans, etc.) and renewable energy, as well as spatial planning, budgets and financing, social or other trends (e.g., working from home, more online services for citizens, etc.) or constraints on specific buildings, like heritage buildings.

### 7.5 Building block 5 – Objectives

The minimum objectives are the ones which are legally binding. For example, the European and Flemish energy and climate goals for the building stock. Each organisation can set higher ambitions on top of the legal requirements and in line with relevant policies defined at a higher policy level.

It is advised to use existing engagements as a framework for the objectives of the strategic real estate plan, for example, the commitments of the Covenant of Mayors or Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) the organisation has already subscribed to. These objectives should be part of the strategic real estate plan and, as such, formally approved within the organisation.

<sup>12</sup>[www.vlaanderen.be/vastgoed/beleid/strategisch-vastgoedplan](http://www.vlaanderen.be/vastgoed/beleid/strategisch-vastgoedplan)

<sup>13</sup>[www.vlisog.be/elise/](http://www.vlisog.be/elise/)



### 7.6 Building block 6 – From vision to strategy

The strategic real estate plan indicates how the current building portfolio will be adapted to the framework conditions, objectives and needs. Defining the core building portfolio can be done by applying an evaluation framework based on the principles defined above.

The core building portfolio is the group of buildings that the organisation will keep for the long term, i.e., buildings that will have to respond to the objectives. It is important to notice that buildings and land are also strategically important for urban development. So it is not necessary for all buildings or land positions to be divested when they are not part of the core portfolio.

From the vision note<sup>14</sup> by Ghent city architect **Peter Vanden Abeele**: **“Real estate is about much more than bricks and money – it is about land, buildings, areas, use and users. Land is used for urban development, as open space or buildable space, or as a strategic reserve (spatially and financially). Buildings accommodate various urban functions and programmes. Areas form the context in which real estate acquires its value and role. Above all, real estate is also about what we do with it - the use - and about the users who occupy the real estate. That gives our real estate life and meaning. Ultimately, it is the users who shape the intended real estate position.”**

### Participant SURE2050: VDAB (the public employment service of Flanders)

With 144 sites covering approximately 390,000 m<sup>2</sup> of gross surface area, VDAB manages a substantial real estate portfolio. VDAB aims to transform the current portfolio into a sustainable and versatile building stock that caters to the organisation’s current and future needs, as well as those of its clients, partners and building users.

This transformation supports hybrid working models and maximises the optimal use of spaces. VDAB actively strives to enhance the flexibility of its buildings and encourages partners to use the same spaces (for example, for training purposes). In this way, VDAB is reducing the number of square metres used, while still operating in close proximity to its clients. VDAB collaborates closely with local partners such as municipalities and training institutions to achieve these objectives.

The real estate plan has been developed based on technical installations screening, building (energy) audits, and assessments of the feasibility of upgrading existing buildings to be future-proof, smart and carbon-neutral.

VDAB actively involves its strategic real estate plan in its interactions with stakeholders. This includes seeking partners for multi-functional use of its portfolio and securing the necessary budget to implement the plan. Additionally, VDAB proactively communicates its plans in advance to (private) real estate players, allowing them to explore potential development opportunities.

**“Modern, sustainable, and appealing real estate that truly supports our service. Positioned close to the customer and shared with partners: that is the essence of our real estate vision, which we call our ‘proximity strategy!’”**



Wim Adriaens  
CEO VDAB, the public employment service of Flanders



<sup>14</sup>[www.stad.gent/stadsbouwmeester](http://www.stad.gent/stadsbouwmeester)

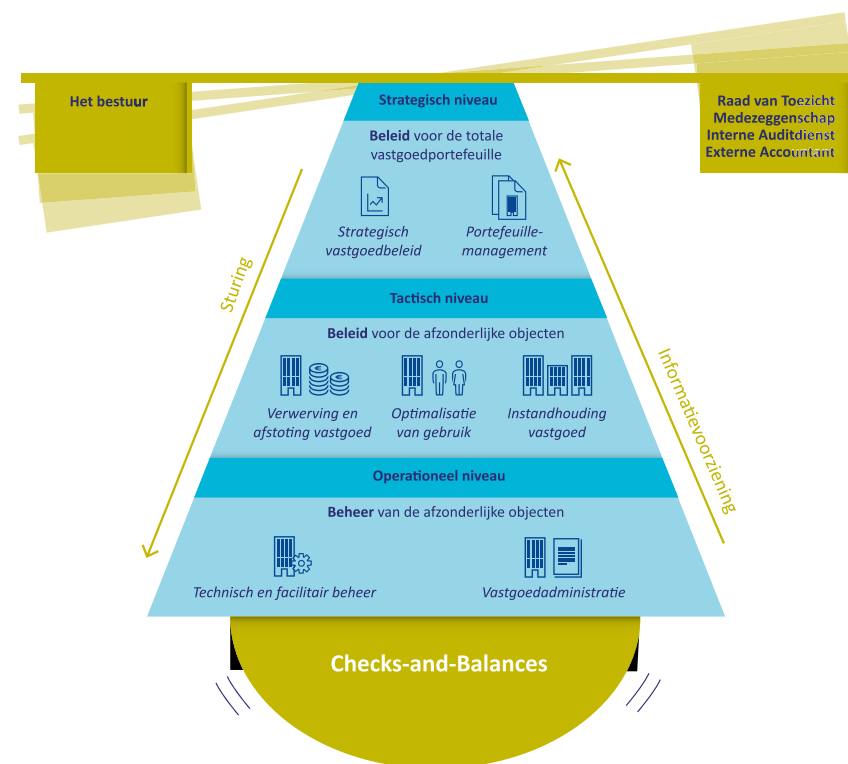


## 7.7 Building block 7 – Integral real estate policy and management

An equally important part of a strategic real estate plan is real estate policy and management within the organisation. This is the basis for the execution of the strategic real estate plan and defines the success of the strategic plan.

### How to make the link between the strategic, tactical and operational levels

SURE2050 used the public real estate management model developed in the Netherlands. The real estate management model is based on three levels (see figure below):



Model real estate management (source original figure: Algemene Rekenkamer, 2016)

1. At the **strategic level**, the organisation determines its strategic real estate policy and manages its portfolio. At this level, decisions are made about the strategic core portfolio (the real estate that is needed to optimally contribute to the strategic goals of the organisation) and the underlying levels are managed.

2. On a **tactical level**, object management takes place (of the individual real estate objects). Decisions about the acquisition and disposal of real estate, optimizing its use and maintenance of the portfolio all fall under object management.

3. The **operational level** relates to object management (of the individual real estate objects). This includes technical and facilities management and maintenance of the real estate administration.

At these three levels, the organisation must have clear agreements and coordination relating to tasks, responsibilities and authorities. Information flows between these levels enabling decision-making at every level.



## 7.8 Building block 8 – Evaluation and adjustment of the real estate strategy

SPREM is a continuous Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle. The development of a strategic real estate plan is part of this and is itself also a PDCA process. This means continuous evaluation of the strategic real estate plan and the process to further develop and monitor and adjust its implementation are an integral part of the strategic real estate plan itself.

These checks and balances should be integrated into the reporting routines of the real estate management team.

Energy management is key to ensuring continuous improvement in energy use and crucial as part of a Plan Do Check Act process. Some key guidelines to take into account include:

- Optimal use of existing installations and buildings (optimisation of settings). As an example, the rule of thumb for an optimal ratio is 20/80, with 20% baseload (energy use outside of operating hours). In practice, we see that for an average building, this ratio often is 40/60. By lowering this baseload, a constant saving can be achieved. Every m2 is cooled/heated, so the building must be used efficiently.
- Re-invest smart – end of life installations (e.g., heating) are often replaced on a one-to-one basis. This is a missed opportunity to select a more interesting technology or better dimensioning of the installation. Monitoring data on buildings helps to make decisions about the best technology for a building and is therefore best collected and interpreted before investment decisions are made.

- Deep renovation – if the building will still be used for a long period, ensure that the parts which are renovated are 2050 proof.
- Data is not the same as insights – use either resources or software support to interpret the data to develop insights and actions.

The granularity of data has a huge impact on its usefulness.

Must-have data: energy use (preferably as granular as possible, including water), outside temperature, building operating hours.

Want-to-have data: degree days, relevant inside temperatures, submeterdata.

Despite the known advantages of energy management, few public organisations currently have resources actively working on energy management. Within the programme, we paid a lot of attention to ensuring energy management is included in real estate organisation and that its added value is recognised.

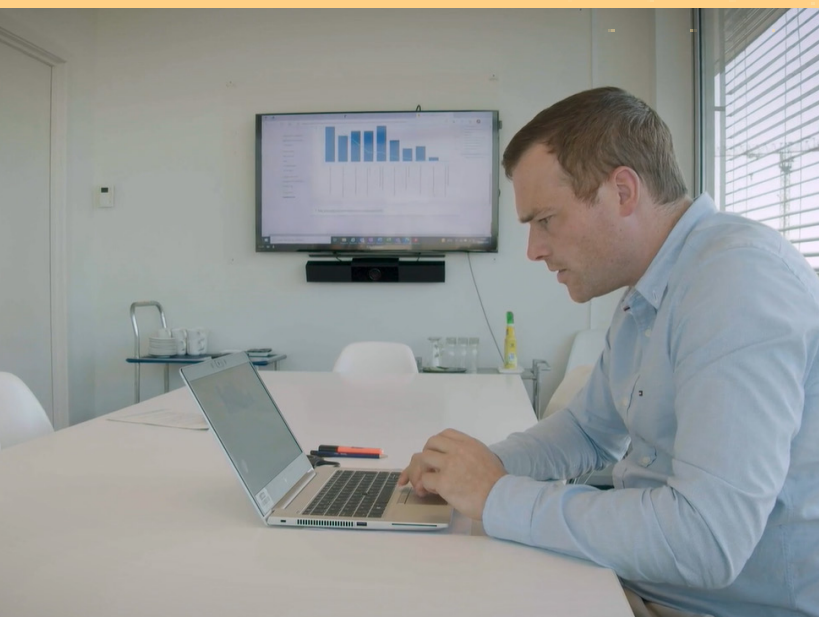
With Terra<sup>15</sup>, the real estate database for public buildings in Flanders, the Flemish Energy Company wants to support public entities with energy management, moving from a database towards a system to support the energy transition and providing information instead of just data.

*“Terra started as a database of the public building portfolio and energy consumption of public buildings, focused on retrospective reporting. As part of the SURE2050 programme, we could further enhance the functionality on Energy Masterplan visualisation and include revolving fund functionality. We are now taking the next step, which involves Terra supporting users with the energy transition and in their journey towards net-zero buildings.”*

Tjeu Binnebeek, Flemish Energy Company

Tjeu also provided in-depth workshops on energy management and interpreting energy data as part of the programme. Interpretations of hidden information in energy and consumption data and anomaly detection form an important basis for detecting potential for energy savings in the short term and support long-term investment decisions.

<sup>15</sup>Terra - Patrimonium- en energiedatabank vlaanderen



Ruben Vanneste  
Energy manager City of Kortrijk

*“Besides facility management, there was a need for a centralised approach within the city of Kortrijk on energy management.*

*This energy cluster should be responsible for the purchase and sale of energy, monitoring the city’s total energy consumption (kWh and €), drawing up internal energy performance contracts, promoting renewable energy and helping with new innovative energy projects, such as local heat networks. In two years, our energy department grew from zero to three people, and our internal revolving fund for energy efficiency measures also increased to a yearly budget of €1 million. For us, energy management is key within our sustainable real estate management and provides the necessary insights to take sound investment decisions. We use Terra to monitor our energy use and manage our revolving fund.”*

## 8. Recommendations

Recommendations were made to the Flemish government based on the experiences of the SURE2050 programme. The SURE2050 programme has led to a number of insights as to what additional policy measures are needed at the Flemish policy level to achieve the European and Flemish objectives on energy for government buildings and to implement this transition process in a cost-effective way.

This transition process is a major challenge for (local) governments and can only be achieved if the right combination of policy, organisation and budget is available.

These three aspects are part of any strategic real estate plan and are also the cornerstones of the recommendations at the Flemish level. The advantages of a strategic real estate plan have a reinforcing effect on policy and support to further streamline and adjust these policies. It is important that policies at all levels are aligned and not just regulatory but also sufficiently supportive.

The recommendations are therefore consistent with existing policies or initiatives in some areas.

*Raise awareness among public organisations about the importance of setting an example to achieve the Flemish energy and climate goals for the built environment.*

In its internal operations, the Flemish government wants to do at least as well as the target groups on which it focuses its policy and take up and propagate its exemplary role in the climate transition.

Despite the many initiatives already taken by public organisations, too little attention is still paid to the importance of leading by example.

In order to raise this awareness, communications from different Flemish policy departments should be better aligned to avoid confusion about Flemish policy objectives and guidelines among the target audience.

The European policy and its implementation within Flanders are an important lever on the path towards achieving the climate objectives concerning public real estate. The public sector is rightly expected to lead by example in this area.

With the recent approval of Fit for 55 at European level, we expect an extra push towards this necessary transformation of public real estate. Within SURE2050, the benefits of a real estate strategy to achieve this transformation were demonstrated. The concept of sustainable strategic real estate management is, however, not yet clearly reflected in European policies.

We assume that it is implicitly required to achieve the objectives. However, focus on its benefits could be an incentive for more countries to promote and support sustainable strategic real estate management. A strategic real estate plan aims to optimise the use of each m2. Scarce financial resources for executing sustainable renovations can thus be spent optimally.

*Support (further) professionalisation of integral real estate policy and management in (local) governments and by extension in all public organisations.*





**Mandatory reporting for achieving carbon-neutral buildings**

**Gain insights into the total cost of a carbon-neutral public real estate portfolio in the short and long term, create clarity on the financial resources available to meet climate targets, and work with local governments on additional revenue sources and financing solutions.**

Trough a strategic real estate plan, Flemish cities and municipalities, and by extension all public organisations, gain insight into the tasks and action plan required to make their real estate future-proof (including use of materials) and carbon-neutral.

Mandatory reporting on achieving a carbon-neutral building stock increases the likelihood of implementing the actions included in the strategic real estate plan.

Annual reporting also has the advantage that consolidated information on implemented energy and climate measures is available for monitoring and possible adjustment of the Flemish energy and climate policy.

To achieve the energy and climate objectives for the public building portfolio of (local) governments, more one-off and recurrent financial resources are needed. Several Flemish government organisations and many local authorities are also structurally underfunded, which has led to a deterioration in the quality and condition of their assets over the past decades.

There is no insight into the total additional costs of making the (local) government's building stock carbon-neutral and climate-adaptive as well as eliminating structural underfunding.

The discrepancy is growing between the financial needs to achieve the climate objectives for the (local) government's building stock on the one hand and the financial resources allocated to this on the other.

The lack of financial resources leads to delayed decisions, loss of value due to overdue maintenance and a low level of in-depth (energetic) renovation. On the other hand, there

are also good examples of both Flemish entities and cities and municipalities generating additional income using their own building stock. Shared use of public buildings between different public organisations or private partners is an example of this. There is also already an increased focus on multifunctional use of public buildings. Drawing on practices from the Netherlands, we see more focus on developing user agreements and applying cost-covering rents, thereby avoiding the use of public buildings as hidden subsidies to third parties.

Subsidies can provide an additional incentive, but are not sufficient and not effective to guarantee the necessary long-term investments. Structural support and resources at local level for real estate combined with the necessary (infrastructure) investments at regional level are needed.

## Moving on...

SURE2050 will continue to exist as a 'brand' and quality label and, through our ambassadors, inspire and engage public organisations to get started with sustainable public real estate management.

The legacy of the project will further spread through the **learning modules**<sup>16</sup>, freely available, and **best practices from our ambassadors**.

All consortium partners are committed to issuing further communications and offering support related to real estate strategy and SURE2050. SURE2050 had an impact on the services offered by the consortium partners. Sustainable renovation projects are first checked against the real estate strategy of the organisation. If this is not yet in place, it is included as advice, and the principles of SURE2050 are applied within the renovation project.

*"A growing number of Limburg municipalities are experiencing the need for a solid long-term plan for their own building stock."*

*As a partner of SURE2050, Dubolimborg has included the concepts and analyses - developed as part of the project - in its permanent offer called 'Dubo à la Carte'. Real estate policy, developed as part of Sure2050, is an integral and structural part of all the advice we provide. Our 'Strategic Real Estate Plan' provides tailor-made advice and guidance to Limburg municipalities in developing a strategy that transcends the building level. The lessons learned from SURE2050 are without a doubt an added value to Dubolimborg and an essential part of our service."*

Paul Claes, director of Dubolimborg vzw

*"Kamp C recently organized a series of sessions on circularity within the building sector, with our circular office building as an example of best practice. A strategic real estate plan is one of the basics for a carbon-free building stock and we want to reach this goal in the most sustainable way, taking into account circular economy principles. One of the sessions showed how to integrate circular principles into a strategic and future-proof real estate plan for public buildings."*

Hans Vannuffelen, Kamp C | photo: Circular office building of Kamp C



<sup>16</sup>[www.be-reel.be/course/sure2050](http://www.be-reel.be/course/sure2050)



To further support public entities on this journey, a framework agreement was created by the Flemish Energy Company and the Facility Company, available to all public entities looking for external support to start with Sustainable Public Real Estate Management. Through this framework agreement, the SURE2050 methodology will continue to be implemented but also evolve and improve based on practice. This framework agreement ensures a cross-fertilisation between the knowledge gained during the SURE2050 project and the market knowledge in the consulting and engineering companies selected within the framework agreement.

*The end of the programme is only the start of the next step: improving modalities and financial capabilities to implement substantiated sustainable renovation projects.*



*The findings and barriers identified by SURE2050 are a source of inspiration to define the support required in the transition towards 2050. As a next step, we are now shaping a new programme, with this programme, we want to tackle these barriers, mainly financing.*





# 2050 **SURE**

Visie op vastgoed